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ABSTRACT

This theme issue includes five articles that focus on educational policy in the Texas legislature in relation to student retention, Internet access, and sexual harassment. "1999 Texas Legislative Session--End of an Era?" (Albert Cortez, Maria Robledo Montecel) examines educational equity issues facing legislators: school funding, including the facilities allotment, funding formulas, and special program allotments; disciplinary alternative education programs; reporting of student dropout rates; reading initiatives; public money for private schooling; and affirmative action in higher education. "Retention Fails, but Continues To Be Promoted" (Pam McCollum) reviews national and state histories of retention policies, including social promotion versus in-grade retention, the failures and costs of social promotion, summer schools, transitional schools, research on retention, and alternatives to retention. "The E-Rate and the Battle for Equity in Educational Technology" (Felix Montes) discusses the Internet as a vital resource, whether the government should intervene to ensure equity, the current status of the Telecommunications Act and E-rate, and efforts to save the E-rate. "Reflections: Making Policy through the State Board of Education" (Joe J. Bernal) gives a state board member's view on what an individual member can accomplish by reviewing his efforts to reform the Texas social studies curriculum. "Sexual Harassment: Historical Background and Litigation Update" (Maria Aurora Yanez) briefly reviews the legislative and legal history of sexual harassment, its impact on students, recent legislation and litigation, and related services available from the IDRA Desegregation Assistance Center. Also included in this issue is a cumulative index for January 1998-December 1998 and a sidebar listing the theme for each 1998 issue. (SAS)

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IDRA FOCUS:
EDUCATION POLICY

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1999 TEXAS LEGISLATIVE SESSION – END OF AN ERA?

Albert Cortez, Ph.D. and Maria "Cuca" Robledo Montecel, Ph.D.

Inside this Issue:

- The failure of in-grade retention
- E-Rate update
- Sexual harassment policy
- Reflections by a State Board of Education member

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The 1999 Texas legislative session opens on January 12 facing a host of issues. IDRA has identified some key issues that will impact equity in education. This article outlines these issues of concern for all children.

As Texas educators have seen a slide in the state's rankings in expenditures per pupil and teacher salaries, advocates have begun to call for increases in minimum teacher salaries and for a significant increase in funding of the state's basic educational program. There is also growing pressure for increases in state funding for school construction due to deteriorating school facilities, rapid enrollment increases in suburban schools and rising voter resistance to additional property taxes.

Some people in the state resent the state funding mechanism that requires wealthy districts to share their resources. This will no doubt lead to wealthy districts' renewed assaults on the state's education finance recapture provisions. The center of the debate about the future of education, however, may involve proposals to create a state-funded voucher program that will funnel state tax dollars into private and religious schools.

With a projected surplus of approximately $2 billion, educators – along with advocates of many other state-funded operations – will battle for revenue. As has been the case in past sessions, the 1999 Texas legislative session promises intense competition among varying interests. Educators battle lobbyists for highways, state employee groups and a host of other major interest groups when it comes to claiming their share of state funding. They will also quarrel among themselves for priority within the education budget.

Teacher groups will support a substantive increase in teacher salaries, which will probably include language that requires local districts to "pass through" additional percentage increases in those many school systems that already pay above the state minimum salary levels. This guarantee is seen as critical to ensuring that when the minimum salary is increased, teachers employed in districts that pay above that minimum level receive similar pay raises.

Administrator groups will most likely support an increase in the basic allotment, which gives them more flexibility in the way money is allocated within school district budgets. In addition to those who will promote more funding for operations or salaries, other education advocates will lobby for funding that is more targeted.

Equity proponents (groups that have historically pushed for greater equity in school funding) are turning their attention to three areas. One calls for increasing funding for the state's facilities funding allotment, which was created during the 1997 legislative session but funded at too low a level to allow all eligible school districts to benefit from the formula.

A second priority is to resist further erosion of the state's equalization formula components by supporting increases in Tier 2 or equalized enrichment funding – that portion of the state finance system that attempts to equalize the amounts of money local districts can raise to supplement the basic state program.

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A third focus will center on fixing glitches in what is referred to as state set-aside programs – formula adjustments that wind up cutting into some districts' equalization funding.

We may also see some special program advocates push for increased funding for specific programs serving special populations. Since special program allotments are calculated as a percentage of the basic allotment, a simple increase in that allotment can result in a domino effect in funding for all state special programs. If the legislature proposes a basic allotment increase, legislative analysts should expect some discussions about program weights as well as some possible moves to include or exclude these components from percentage increases.

While the 1997 session was marked by a major attempt to revise the state's antiquated tax system, including modifying the tax code to lessen reliance on the local property tax, the idea that entered like a lion turned into a sacrificial lamb by the session's end. Many parties agreed that the Texas taxing schemes needed a major facelift. But most felt that interests other than their own should take more of the tax burden. Even with the support of the former lieutenant governor – one of the most powerful and skillful in recent history – the tax reform package floundered and died, to be replaced by a one-time cutback in local property taxes through an increase in the homestead exemption. While some may try to revive the discussions about state tax reform, many legislators learned important lessons that will most likely preclude any serious attention to this critical issue in the upcoming session.

Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs

Rising concerns about the state's disciplinary alternative education programs (DAEPs) will lead to proposals that seek much more data on these programs. Such concerns will also push for the inclusion of these programs into the state's regular accountability system. According to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) data, approximately 74,000 pupils were referred to DAEPs, which are usually located away from the regular campus.

Although often thought of as places to send serious offenders who pose a threat to the safety of other pupils, the limited data available on the programs for the first two years of operation reveals that three-fourths of the students referred are not referred for serious offenses outlined in the law. Rather, the offenses involve violations of local school codes of conduct that include behaviors such as speaking out of turn and other less severe offenses.

Of major concern to minority advocates is the data that shows minority pupils are overrepresented in DAEPs and the lack of data on the academic effectiveness of many of these new campuses.

Student Dropouts

Growing concerns with TEA's methods of calculating and reporting student dropout rates may lead to a proposal that will tighten district reporting requirements and modify the state's procedure for calculating the longitudinal dropout rate. A longitudinal dropout rate refers to the estimate of the number of students who fail to get a high school diploma from Texas public schools. This method uses an approach that tracks the number of students enrolled over time up until the point that they actually graduate.

Current state dropout rates involve developing an estimate of the number and percent of students who drop out in a single year. This approach compiles information on school "leavers" for a particular period (usually one year) and divides that number into the total number of students enrolled in the grade spans covered in that particular year. For example, in XYZ ISD the number of "leavers" in 1998 was 100 pupils, with most being enrolled in grades six to 12. One calculation method would take the district's total enrollment of 1,000 pupils and calculate an annual dropout rate of only 10 percent (100 ÷ 1,000). However, another method would involve considering the enrollment in grades six through 12 alone, which entails only 500 pupils and derives an annual dropout rate of 20 percent (100 ÷ 500).

A more sophisticated approach involves the actual tracking of an individual student over his or her entire school career and determining what number and percentage of pupils in a particular class actually earns a high school diploma. In this example of a longitudinal rate, the class of students who enter sixth grade in 1990 would be followed over time and then in May of 1998, the state would identify the number of pupils that are still enrolled in a school and estimate the dropout rate.

Given the sophisticated nature of the

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Retention Fails, but Continues to be Promoted

Pam McCollum, Ph.D.

A review of education columns in newspapers across the country shows that politicians and education policy-makers are taking a stance against "social promotion" in the public schools. In his 1998 State of the Union Address, President Clinton linked ending the practice of social promotion to improving schools. The centerpiece of his education policy was a proposed voluntary national test based on national standards in fourth grade reading and eighth grade math. The president's plan would retain students in-grade who do not meet those standards and it would give them the tools they need to learn.

The intuitive appeal of holding students back who have not mastered grade-level knowledge and skills is so strong and its history is so long that its efficacy is rarely questioned, even though research overwhelmingly shows that retention has negative personal and academic effects.

During a 30-year period, the educational pendulum has alternated between advocating social promotion and supporting in-grade retention. *Social promotion* refers to the practice of passing students who have failed to master part or all of the grade-level curriculum on to the next grade with their cohort of age-grade peers. *In-grade retention*, on the other hand, requires students to repeat the same grade a second time in order to master problem material.

The pendulum has changed directions by decade. For example, in the 1970s, social promotion was favored, but with the call for raising educational standards in the 1980s and its attendant minimal competence testing, the favor returned to retention. By 1990, however, two of the largest school districts in the country, Chicago and New York City, were advocating promoting students with their age-appropriate cohort.

As we approach the year 2000, the pendulum clearly indicates in-grade retention as the favored response to ameliorating poor academic achievement. Across the country, cities such as Philadelphia, Long Beach, Milwaukee, Detroit, Boston, Oakland (Calif.), Springfield (Mass.) and Corpus Christi (Texas) have already abolished or given notice that social promotion will be abolished by the year 2000.

The political nature of joining the "end social promotion" bandwagon cannot be ignored. The governors of California, Delaware, Michigan, Wisconsin and Texas have all spoken out against social promotion, while others are sure to follow suit. "Getting tough" on social promotion is coupled with a call for higher educational standards.

In 1997, the Chicago Public Schools took the lead in abolishing social promotion. Students who do not master curriculum at certain checkpoints or "promotional gates" are required to attend summer school to master the content or repeat their grade the following year.

A rarely mentioned consequence of ending social promotion is a sharp rise in summer school enrollment for students who fail to meet promotion standards. Summer school now functions as the educational system's "release valve" for dealing with large numbers of students who have not met the new standards. The following examples give an indication of the magnitude of the problem.

- In Chicago, 130,200 students attended summer school this year at a cost of $65 million (Spielman, 1998). Of those, more than 11,500 students did not successfully complete summer school and will repeat their previous grade. Even more disturbing is the fact that 14 percent of the 11,294 students who were retained last year will be retained a third time. Could it be the Chicago Public Schools has adopted the concept of a "three-peat" from the Chicago Bulls?
- The Denver Public Schools required 2,500 students to attend summer school as a condition for promotion in the 1997-98 school year (Harrington-Lueker, 1998).
- Washington, D.C., schools had difficulty financing summer school for the 20,000 students who did not meet testing standards (Harrington-Lueker, 1998).

A little-known fact regarding summer school is that some districts require students to pay for each course they must take. When one considers that the majority of students who are required to attend and pass summer school as a condition for promotion are low-income minority students, it becomes obvious that the requirement of summer school attendance turns out to be financed by those families who are least able to pay.

Another corollary structure to in-grade retention is the transitional school or academy for students who are not yet ready (in terms of mastering grade-level skills) to transition from one level of schooling to

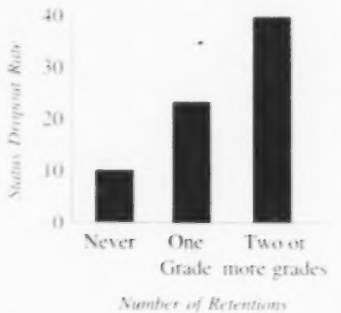
Retention Fails - *continued on page 4*

Did you know?

Fifty percent of students who repeat a grade do no better the second time, and 25 percent of the students actually do worse the second time.

Retention is expensive, costing the country an average $10 billion every year. It is more cost effective to increase educational resources to improve student performance and eliminate the need for retention.

Nationwide, retained students are more likely to drop out



Source: IDRA. "Separating Fact from Fiction about Education: In-grade Retention Does Not Work." *Class Notes* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, November 1997).

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another. In the case of double and triple retainees, pre-high school and pre-junior high schools serve as "stopovers" for those who are physically too large to attend classes with students two or three years their junior. Transition rooms are no longer adequate to hold the burgeoning numbers of students who are being retained in-grade.

The pendulum has no memory. The schools chancellor of New York City recently called for raising educational standards by reinstituting the Promotional Gates Program in the year 2000 and thus curtailing social promotion. This program, in essence, constitutes a warmed-over version of the same program initiated in 1981 to check the educational progress of students in grades four and seven, based on reading scores. In the second year of the program, officials also tested math achievement. The program was a failure that cost in excess of $40 million to implement (House, 1989). Instead of restructuring or redesigning education to serve students, the schools simply gave stronger doses of what had not been effective previously. One researcher stated, "As a consequence, it was not uncommon to find 12-year-olds stuck in fourth grade and 17-year-olds repeating seventh grade" (Darling-Hammond, 1998).

Reflecting on New York's earlier unsuccessful experience with the Promotional Gates Program, it is difficult to understand why it will soon be re-implemented. One has to ask the question, "Who is not learning in this situation – the students or the administrators?" Why, in a span of less than 20 years, is the same unsuccessful policy of retaining students at promotional gates being re-implemented, particularly in light of what research has shown about the negative consequences of retention in the interim?

Retention Receives Failing Grades

Social science research (and educational research, in particular) is often criticized for not producing definitive results. Perhaps a greater irony lies in the fact that when definitive results are produced, they are ignored. Certainly that is the case with the research on in-grade retention.

The research is unequivocal – the effects of retention are harmful. As early as the 1930s, studies reported the negative effects of retention on academic achievement (Ayer, 1933; Kline, 1933). Retention does not benefit students academically or socially (Foster, 1993; Harvey, 1994; Holmes, 1989; Holmes and Mathews, 1984; Shepard and Smith, 1989; Walters and Borgers, 1995). Highlights from the literature include the following.

THE RESEARCH IS UNEQUIVOCAL – THE EFFECTS OF RETENTION ARE HARMFUL. RETENTION DOES NOT BENEFIT STUDENTS ACADEMICALLY OR SOCIALLY.

- In-grade retention does not ensure significant gains in achievement for children who are academically below grade level (Bocks, 1977; Cárdenas, 1995; Holmes, 1983; Holmes, 1989; Holmes and Mathews, 1984).
- A meta-analysis of 63 studies found that on average, retained children fare worse than their promoted counterparts on both personal adjustment and academic outcomes (Holmes, 1989; Foster, 1993).
- The threat of non-promotion is not a motivating force for students to work harder (Bossing and Brien, 1979; Darling-Hammond, 1998).
- Retention is strongly associated with dropping out of school in later years (Grissom and Shepard, 1989; Roderick, 1995); a second retention makes dropping out of school a virtual certainty (Setencich, 1994).
- Small advantages that accrued to first graders who were retained washed out by the end of third grade (Butler, 1990a; Butler, 1990b; Karweit and Wasik, 1992; Shepard, 1989; Snyder, 1992).
- Students who are retained suffer lower self-esteem and view retention as a punishment and a stigma, not a positive event designed to help them (Byrnes, 1989; Cárdenas, 1995).
- Retained students on the average, compared to matched controls, were reported to do more poorly on follow-up measures of social adjustment, attitudes toward school, behavioral outcomes and attendance (Holmes, 1989; Meisels and Liaw, 1993; Rumberger, 1995).
- Analysis of those who are retained in-grade shows that African American students and Hispanic students are retained at twice the rate of White students (George, 1993). Additionally, 40 percent of students who repeat grades come from the lowest socio-economic quartile, as compared to only 8.5 percent from the highest quartile (Meisels and Liaw, 1993).
- Between 1990 to 1997, 66 studies were conducted on retention, with only one supporting it (Lenarduzzi and McLaughlin, 1990).

How many students are retained annually? The national prevalence of in-grade retention proves difficult to ascertain because national retention data are not collected by the U.S. Department of Education. However, the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health found that 21.3 percent of adolescents were retained in at least one grade (Resnick, et al., 1997). State-level retention data are not collected uniformly, and when collected, they are not comparable due to their idiosyncratic nature.

In Texas during the 1995-96 academic year, 144,683 students (4.3 percent) were retained at a cost of $4,756 per pupil, causing an additional expenditure of $688 million dollars (TEA, 1997). The profile of retained students in Texas does not follow the national trend. While two-thirds of all retentions nationally occur between kindergarten and third grade (Meisels and Liaw, 1993), in Texas the highest rates of retention occur in the ninth grade among disadvantaged, urban minority males. For the years 1992 to 1995, one in six Texas ninth grade students, primarily Hispanic and African American, was retained (see box on Page 5). This is particularly disturbing considering that being over-age in grade more than doubles a student's chances of being retained in-grade and of dropping out (Shepard and Smith, 1989; Roderick, 1994).

The next highest percentage of retentions in Texas occurred in first grade, where total retention rates for 1992-93 to 1995-96 were 6 percent, 5.8 percent and 5.9 percent, respectively. At this level, African American and Hispanic students also had higher rates of representation than did White students (TEA, 1997).

Texas law requires that students show academic proficiency to be promoted, but local districts set their own promotion policy. The Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) test was not designed to be used to determine whether students should be promoted, but it is used that way in some districts. A case in point is Waco, Texas, where parents brought suit against the Waco Independent School District to block the board's 1997-98 promotion policy, which requires students in grades one through eight

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to pass all of their core classes and maintain a 90 percent attendance rate. Students in third through eighth grade must score a combined average of 70 on the math and reading portions of the TAAS. The new policy resulted in 11.9 percent of elementary and middle school students being retained in-grade. The injunction was turned down recently by a state district judge, but a trial for a permanent injunction against the policy is expected next year (*San Antonio Express-News*, 1998).

Historical Review of Grade Level Retention

Year	Total Students*	Number Retained	Retention Rate
1993-94	3,129,085	125,959	4.0%
1994-95	3,193,214	128,369	4.0%
1995-96	3,399,451	144,683	4.3%
1996-97	**3,475,407**	**147,202**	**4.2%**

* The value for "Total Students" is derived using information from two consecutive PEIMS submissions. It is not the same as fall enrollment counts that districts report directly to PEIMS.

Source: Texas Education Agency, 1998.

Reasons for Retention

The reasons for retention vary with districts' promotion policies, but in most cases, they are related to a state's accountability measure. In a study of characteristics of retained children, D.A. Byrnes determined through a survey of teachers and principals that children retained in-grade were described by educators as being immature and having low self-esteem and low motivation (1989). In the particular district where the study was conducted, limited English proficiency was also characteristic of children who were retained.

Another underlying reason for retention is that it is perceived as efficient and meritocratic. The assumption is that those who work sufficiently are promoted; those who do not work hard enough, do not earn promotion to the next grade and are retained in-grade until they learn the curriculum. It also serves to keep the structure of schools intact, maintaining the status quo. It is a strategy that projects the aura of cracking down on students who are "academic slackers" by instituting stricter standards and policies for promotion. Such policies play well to the public but, unfortunately, are harmful to students.

E. House summarizes some of the detrimental effects of in-grade retention:

> Students are retained in rather arbitrary and inconsistent ways, and those flunked are more likely to be poor, males and minorities, although holding students back is practiced to some degree in rich and poor schools alike. The effects of flunking are immediately traumatic to the children, and the retained children do worse academically in the future, with many of them dropping out of school altogether. Incredibly, being retained has as much to do with children dropping out as does their academic achievement. It would be difficult to find another educational practice on which the evidence is so unequivocally negative (1989).

Alternatives to Retention

Traditional offerings for students who are retained in-grade include two-year kindergartens, transitional rooms or "half grades" and tutoring programs. Two-year kindergartens and transitional rooms operate on the premise that students just need more time to mature and develop the appropriate skills. An ancillary line of thinking is that curricula should be presented in a linear fashion. In general, the purpose of these traditional responses to improving retained students' achievement is to give them a larger dose of what failed to work the first time. There is also a tendency to place students in remedial tracks that often become permanent. The approach is deficit in nature and situates the reason for failure within the child, ignoring the possibility that the educational program, the instructional approach or the teacher played a part in the child's failure.

Linda Darling-Hammond calls for a shift in perspective from a deficit model (which situates the problem of poor achievement solely within the child) to one that acknowledges that classroom and school practices may be contributing factors to a student's lack of achievement (1998). Acknowledging the ineffectiveness of both retention and social promotion, she offers administrators four complementary alternatives to retention.

Strategy 1: Enhance the professional development of teachers to ensure they have the knowledge and skills to teach a wider range of students to meet standards. This strategy involves staff development in the sense of sustained learning over time, where teachers learn effective strategies to help students learn standards. Such an approach to staff development would include teacher academies, professional development laboratories or university offerings that support individual and collective teacher learning (Darling-Hammond, 1998). Staff development needs to be sustained and responsive to teachers' needs. Darling-Hammond makes an often-ignored point that the two most common motivators for achievement – standards and assessments – do not operate without competent teachers.

Strategy 2: Redesign school structures to support more intensive learning. Age-grade cohorts were adopted in the mid-19th century to efficiently move groups of students through a sequential curriculum correlated to grade. Given the different rates of development, particularly for children in the early grades, multi-age classes (where teachers stay with the same class for more than one year) provide many advantages: (a) exposure to older, more competent peers who can help provide appropriate models of behavior and academic assistance; (b) opportunities for more intensive instruction; and (c) teachers who come to know their students better over time.

Another example of structural change that might support learning is cross-grade grouping. Students do not have to be locked into their appropriate age-grade cohort for all of their instruction. For example, a fourth grade student who has trouble with reading could attend reading instruction with the third graders; likewise, more advanced readers could attend a reading class with the fifth graders. Some students may only perform poorly in one subject but excel in others. In these cases, repeating an entire grade deprives them of learning new

Retention Fails *- continued on page 9*

THE E-RATE AND THE BATTLE FOR EQUITY IN EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY

Felix Montes, Ph.D.

Some resources – such as electricity, gas and water – are so essential to normal modern living that society wisely tries to ensure that everyone has access to them at modest prices. About 60 years ago, telephone services were considered such an essential resource for modern living that the government established the means to ensure telephone access to most people.

With the coming of the Internet and its conceptualization as a resource for education, the federal government has established the goal that every school be connected to the Internet by the year 2000. This new goal gives rise to several important questions. Is the Internet such an important resource? Should the government intervene to ensure equity of this resource among schools? What is the current status of this effort?

Is the Internet a Vital Resource?

Today, few people doubt that the Internet is important to society. It was important to the military long before most of us knew the word Internet. It is also important for business. In fact, Internet-based electronic commerce (e-commerce) is one of the most significant economic and social forces today.

The boom in large-scale consumer e-commerce is illustrated by the success of Ebay, Inc. (www.ebay.com), an on-line person-to-person trading community in which buyers and sellers come together in an auction format to trade personal items. Ebay, Inc., made its stock market debut in late September at $18 a share. The stock skyrocketed to the $80 range in the first few weeks. Wall Street analysts who predicted that the stock would reach the $100 range were considered bullish. Reality rendered even these analysts conservative, when the stock passed the $200 mark a few months later. Ebay, Inc., claims it has nearly 1 million items for sale in more than 1,000 categories. It generated revenue of $12.9 million for the third quarter of 1998, a gain of 787 percent over the same period last year. Other well-know examples of this e-commerce boom are Amazon.com, Yahoo.com and Xoom.com.

The Internet is important in almost every other sector of society as well, including politics, entertainment, science, technology and religion. Because the Internet has become such an intrinsic part of modern society, at a minimum it should be accessible to every school – just as every school should have access to electricity, water and phone services.

However, the Internet poses a specific promise for educators. It opens a world of information in an interactive and participatory way that can enrich the educational experience beyond what has been possible in the whole history of humanity (see Green, 1997). A teacher in San Antonio, can take students to Paris's Louvre museum (mistral.culture.fr/louvre) and to the Smithsonian Institute (www.si.edu) in Washington, D.C., during the same morning from the comfort of the classroom.

Teachers can access lesson plans for science, language and mathematics classes developed by other teachers across the country and can use the Internet to implement those lessons. The possibilities remain endless, and many schools with the appropriate access and training are taking advantage of them. Those without access are being left behind, which creates a dual system of technology haves and have-nots. In order to halt yet another system of injustice, *every* school should have access to the Internet.

Should the Government Intervene to Ensure Equity?

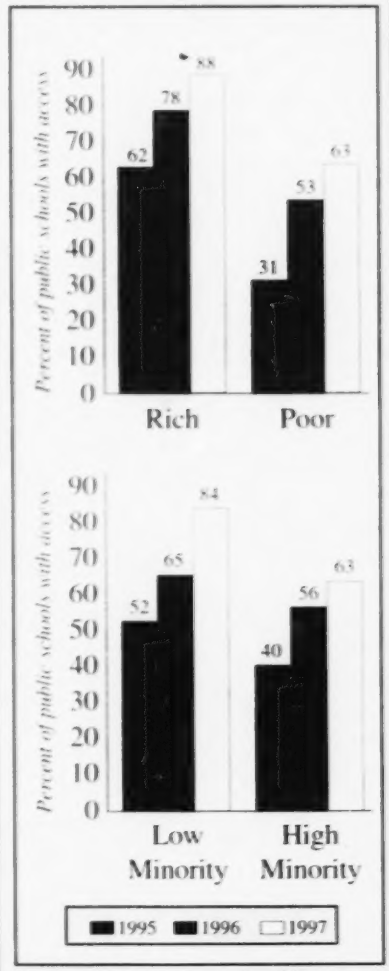
There is a great disparity in Internet access between wealthy and poor schools. Even though overall schools have improved their Internet access during the last three years, in 1997 the gap between wealthy, low-minority schools and poor, high-minority schools continued to be greater than 20 percentage points (see box below), according to the latest figures from the National Center for Education Statistics (1998).

In instructional terms, the discrepancy is even greater. Wealthier, low-minority schools are twice as likely to have access to the Internet in the actual classroom than are poor, high-minority schools. More alarming, the gap is expanding rather than contracting, as illustrated in the box on Page 7.

Historically, the federal government has been able to use its power to effectively influence other institutions toward a more fair and just society. The federal government exhibited its power with the forced dismantling of the institution of slavery and also with the more recent Civil Rights Act. It has also played an important role in ensuring equal opportunity in education. Thus, it was within this historical background and with great vision and leadership that the federal government assumed the task of finding a way to decrease the current technological divide. Accordingly, President Clinton signed into law the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

The E-Rate - continued on page 7

INTERNET ACCESS BY SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 1998

The E-Rate - continued from page 6

What is the Current Status?

The government created the original Telecommunications Act to ensure affordable telephone services to people who are poor. The law was expanded to provide affordable Internet access through educational rates, or E-rates, to public and private non-profit schools and libraries, particularly those located in rural and inner-city areas. Telecommunications carriers must offer their lowest rates to elementary and secondary schools and libraries through discounts ranging from 20 percent to 90 percent on a sliding-scale formula. Since access to the Internet requires a certain infrastructure, the law allows for 20 percent to 90 percent discounts on Internet access and connections when the schools and libraries contract with private companies to wire them to the Internet. Overall, the average discount was expected to be about 60 percent, with the poorest schools receiving an average discount of 80 percent to 90 percent. The level of discount is determined by the number of students who qualify for the national school lunch program. The government created a $2.25 billion fund for this purpose.

The response was overwhelming. Even though the requirements were stringent and the paperwork difficult, more than 30,000 schools across the nation applied for E-rates during the 75-day open application period, from January 30 to April 15, 1998. Although a substantial majority of the schools in the country could apply for E-rates, there is no doubt about its equity intent. The nation's poorest schools and libraries requested about 53 percent of the fund. The wealthier schools requested about 0.3 percent of the total fund.

On June 12, 1998, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), under intense pressure from congressional friends of large, long-distance telephone carriers, decreased the E-rate fund from $2.25 billion to $1.9 billion. In large part, money collected from long-distance telephone carriers such as AT&T and MCI will cover the costs for this program. The FCC will collect $325 million every three months, instead of the originally proposed $560 million during the period.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 created reforms that reduced access charges to the telecommunications industry. It is estimated that during the first year of the reforms, the companies saved over $2.4 billion from access charge reductions, which would more than offset the expected E-rate demand of $2.03 billion.

Under the same pressures, the FCC also re-examined the restrictions for application to exclude internal wiring in many cases. Additionally, it has lengthened the period of discount distribution to 18 months from one year in the original design. According to some reports, these changes have invalidated hundreds of applications and school technology plans. However, the poorest schools still get the highest priority, and they are the first ones to be funded, although with less money than they requested. They also will continue to receive the discount for internal wiring. Reportedly, almost all applicants will get less money, and the money will come later than expected. All of this will cause schools and libraries to readjust their plans. But given the current political climate, even at this level of funding, the E-rate has to be considered a step forward for education.

The Schools and Libraries Corporation (SLC) was charged with allocating FCC funding for the E-rate program. The SLC Internet site (www.slcfund.org) provides continuous information about the E-rate and the application process. Your school can apply on-line through this site. The SLC conducts a careful examination of each request to ensure that the application adheres to all requirements and that the applicant is eligible to receive the funding. Applicants must certify that they have a technology plan that has been approved by their state education agency. The state or local authority must provide a description of the services sought and how those services will be used to enhance education.

On November 23, 1998, the SLC began the process of notifying 1998 E-rate applicants about the results of their requests for discounts. The SLC is sending commitment letters in waves. For more information about this process, visit the SLC site listed above. The SLC opened a second period of E-rate applications on December 1, 1998. Schools, libraries and consortia are invited to submit their requests for services for the 1999-00 funding year. This application window will remain open for at least 80 days, closing on February 19, 1999 at the earliest. SLC will announce the final closing date soon.

The fight for the E-rate is not over. There are powerful political forces working hard to undermine it. The long-distance telephone companies started to pass the costs down to the consumer on July 1 by adding a 5 percent surcharge fee to phone bills. This is clearly unfair since these companies already receive significant benefits from the deregulation introduced with the Telecommunications Act of 1996. Motivated by the surcharge, some consumer groups and lawmakers, labeling the surcharge as the "Gore Tax," have expressed strong opposition to the E-rate and have threatened to kill it.

Still, the general acceptance of the program and its intrinsic fairness has prompted many organizations to defend it. A survey conducted by the Education and Library Networks Coalition found that over 80 percent of the schools and libraries in the United States planned to apply for the E-rate and, as reported above, many have done so already. For more information about this

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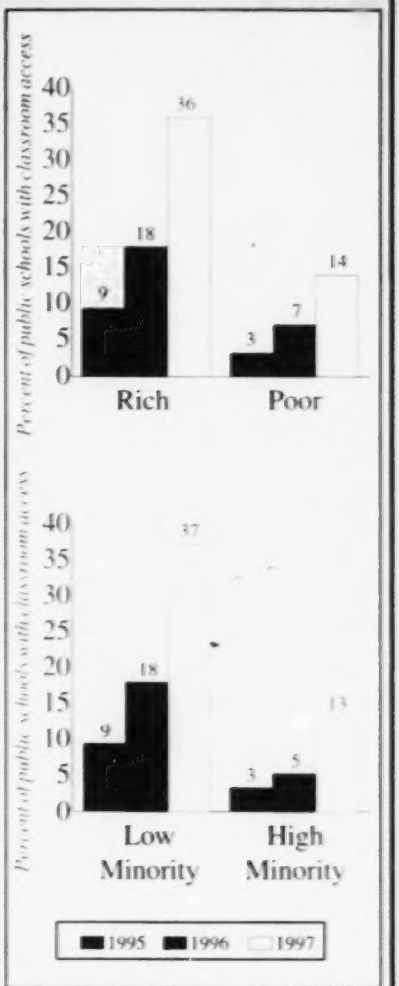
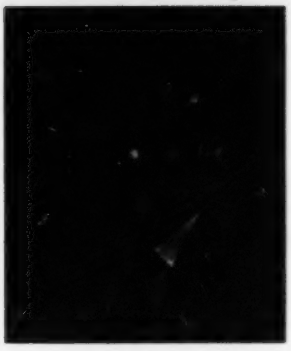
INSTRUCTIONAL CLASSROOM INTERNET ACCESS



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 1998

REFLECTIONS



Dr. Joe J. Bernal

MAKING POLICY THROUGH THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Establishing policy and providing leadership for the Texas public school system is the responsibility of the State Board of Education. The board is made up of 15 members who are elected by districts, with each district representing roughly 1.2 million people. I represent District 3, which covers 12 Texas counties including 70 percent of Bexar County (parts of five school districts and all of 10 others). District 3 also includes school districts in 11 counties south of San Antonio all the way to the U.S.-Mexico border in Hidalgo County. Another way to look at the enormous size of District 3 is to realize it covers parts of five congressional districts and about five state senatorial districts.

Although it is difficult for one board member to represent more than 1 million people, the alternative is to have the governor appoint members, as is done in California. In Texas, Gov. George Bush named Mike Moses as commissioner of the Texas Education Agency. He also selects one of the 15 State Board of Education members to chair the board. In our case, the governor named Jack Christie, a chiropractic physician from Houston.

Generally speaking, if you are happy with the governor's politics, then you are likely to be pleased with his or her appointments. If not, then you probably feel underrepresented. As for me, I'll take an elected person anytime. I trust the people's judgment much more than I would a governor's. Governors, regardless of party affiliations, tend to name people to boards based on how much those people have contributed to their campaigns.

I ran for a position on the State Board of Education in 1996 thinking I could make a contribution and help improve educational opportunities for all Texas children. I say this not to seek approbation or personal commendation, but because I truly recognize there are zealots in policy-making bodies who want to throw the babies out with the dirty bath water. Both the Democrat and the Republican who ran against me in 1996, for instance, had given up on public schools. Such people in public offices preach that public schools are beyond repair, that students are immersed in gangs, violence and drug abuse and that they are not learning. The only way to repair the situation, they declared, is to privatize schools, thereby providing competition for public schools. Competition would then simplistically force public schools to change.

One way I chose to provide educational opportunities to all children was to take a close look at the new curriculum, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), which in 1997 was undergoing its final touch-up job. I particularly examined the sections on social studies and, in greater detail, Texas history. I could still recall the history book being used at San Antonio College some years back. It had angered me greatly because the text book stated superficially that nothing of any consequence had occurred in Texas prior to 1836. The mere idea that I could live long enough to change that perception would certainly make my life worthwhile. I understood that if a person knows who he is and where he comes from, his culture is thus enhanced and validated. That text book author had severed the real roots of many Tejanos, who by 1836 were already into their fourth generation as native Texans. Already that truth had been uncritically replaced with what the author perceived was politically correct at the time he wrote his book.

With a healthier attitude toward minorities, we were not only able to include 1718 as an important date, but also 1821 and 1824. Putting on my old elementary teacher's hat, I was able to convince curriculum experts that 1718 is important because it is the date Mission San Antonio de Valero (later known as the Alamo) was established for the purpose of educating Indians and introducing them to Christianity. The year 1821 is important to Texas because it was then that Tejanos living in this northern province of Spain, along with all other Mexicans throughout New Spain, had unshackled themselves from their European oppressors, much like the U.S. colonies had won their independence from England in 1776.

The flag of 1824 was the flag flying over the Alamo during that battle because the Tejanos and new citizens of Texas (who valiantly died there) were fighting for their rights under the 1824 Mexican Constitution. This constitution provided for a democracy similar to that of the United States and would give Texas its autonomy. Texas, like many other northern and southern Mexican states, had rebelled against the centralist government that wanted to re-establish itself as a monarchy.

Another part of Texas social studies was a section that spotlighted war heroes. It included famous names like Admiral Chester Nimitz, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Audi Murphy and others. "What about Cleto Rodriguez?" I asked. "Kli who?" was the response.

Some 25 years ago, I read Raul Morin's *Among the Valiant*, a book about the 17 Mexican American soldiers in World War II and the Korean War who won the Congressional Medal of Honor, the highest medal given for valor in action and for patriotic devotion to duty. I had known Cleto Rodriguez, for he lived in San Antonio following his return from the war. Wouldn't it be great if I could open this door and show our children how so many of their ancestors had fought valiantly for their country? If Cleto's name would be added to the list, then text book publishers would have to look at and write about us as true heroes and defenders of our country.

Although adding to the TEKS curriculum in areas such as language arts, math and other subjects was important, such efforts were

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INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

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Math and Science
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Young Children
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Volume XXV, No. 5, May

Gifted and Talented Students
Volume XXV, No. 6, June-July

Technology for Education
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Volume XXV, No. 8, September

School Reform
Volume XXV, No. 9, October

Education Policy
Volume XXIII, No. 10, November-December

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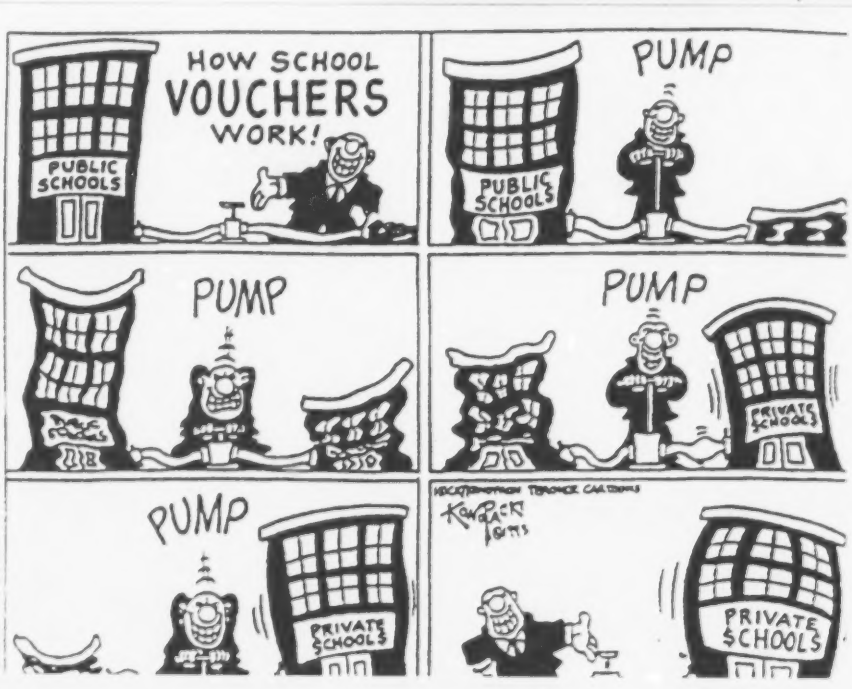
Making Policy *- continued from page 8*

not as gratifying as making Texas history more "correct." Not only was it a treat, but it was a task of love! Next time around, I'll write about the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), the state test everyone seems to love to hate. That task is yet to come, however. The seriousness of it is that we need to align that assessment instrument to the state curriculum. Putting it another way, the TAAS needs to test the TEKS.

Joe J. Bernal, Ph.D., is a member of the Texas State Board of Education.



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Retention Fails *- continued from page 5*

academic material.

Strategy 3: Provide students the support and services they need in order to succeed when they are needed. This strategy is presented together with the fourth due to their interrelation.

Strategy 4: Use classroom assessments that better inform teaching. In order to know that students need help and to be able to structure lessons appropriately, teachers should use performance-based or informal assessment techniques to understand how students approach learning. Informal assessment techniques such as keeping anecdotal records and using checklists and rubrics as part of the instruction, provide information on the process of learning rather than just the product (i.e., standardized test scores). Once teachers identify the problems, schools should provide opportunities for students to receive instructional support or resources as they need it. Saturday school has proven to be effective in providing these services. Darling-Hammond cites Reading Recovery and Success for All as two successful literacy programs that stress individual instruction in the early grades (1998).

The Talent Development model originated from research conducted by the Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk (CRESPAR) at John Hopkins University. It provides a fresh approach for reconceptualizing instruction for students who have not been well-served by traditional education. Everything about Talent Development schools' organization, curriculum teaching and student support structure stems from the belief that schools must develop talent and that they can do this best in schools where every student has access to an engaging standards-based curriculum in heterogeneous classrooms. In addition, schools must be a place where every student is in a classroom with caring teachers and peers who are "rooting for them to do well, who are encouraging them to give their best in the classroom, and who are doing everything in their power to help them improve their skills and increase their understanding" (MacIver and Plank, 1996).

A. Wheelock cautions that setting up Talent Development schools is a complex process that takes several years (1998). It is not based on funding a series of "add-ons" but depends on a coherent culture of high standards grounded in research-based strategies to improve student achievement.

As we approach the new millennium, educators speak of becoming part of the "information superhighway" and advancing classroom learning through technology. It is ironic that futuristic conceptualizations of education admit discussions of retention, a practice that was first shown to have negative effects on students as early as the 1930s. Since then, the literature has grown in depth and breadth. Yet, predictably, every 10 years we decide to give it another chance.

Retention gets the public's attention by advocating a kind of educational "tough love," but unfortunately it does not deliver what it promises. The growing numbers of students who are retained two and three times and the implementation of special schools for the legion of students who cannot pass to the next level of schooling, attest to the fact that we need to explore other alternatives. Students need to have access to different ways of acquiring the knowledge and skills they need for the 21st century. It is time to admit that retention has never worked well; moreover, it does not offer a viable alternative for the future.

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Sexual Harassment: Historical Background and Litigation Update

María Aurora Yánez, M.A.

Schools in our nation were doing a poor job of confronting sexual harassment. Recognizing this, Congress passed Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 that prohibits sex discrimination in education. Twenty-five years later, the National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education (NCWGE) assessed the impact of Title IX on gender discrimination. The resulting report, *Title IX at 25: Report Card on Gender Equity*, determines how successful girls and women have been in achieving access to higher education and athletics, treatment of pregnant and parenting students, and protection from and legal recourse to sexual harassment, among other things.

NCWGE contends that sexual harassment continues to be a major obstacle to girls and women in part because of its historical background:

> There are no benchmark data from the early 1970s regarding sexual harassment; however, the effort to combat and eradicate this barrier reaches back to just a few years after Title IX's enactment. In 1977, one year after the first district court decision recognizing sexual harassment in the workplace, a district court, in *Alexander vs. Yale University*, identified such misconduct in colleges as a violation of Title IX... Three years later, in 1980, the National Advisory Council of Women's Educational Programs recommended that OCR [Office for Civil Rights] issue a federal policy on sexual harassment so that schools and colleges would understand their responsibility to stop or prevent sexual harassment (NCWGE, 1997).

In 1997, the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) issued its *Sexual Harassment Guidance: Harassment of Students by School Employees, Other Students, or Third Parties*. It specifically states that sexual harassment is prohibited by Title IX. Furthermore, the guide clarifies that it applies to all students in elementary, middle or junior high, and high school levels. It also provides information about the types of actions that constitute sexual harassment and the responsibility adults have in eliminating it.

Furthermore, OCR states it "has long recognized that sexual harassment of students by school employees, other students and third parties is covered by Title IX." Its policy and practice is consistent with Congress' goal in enacting Title IX to eliminate sex-based discrimination in federally assisted education programs. It is also consistent with the U.S. Supreme Court precedent and well-established legal principles that have developed as a result of Title IX and related anti-discrimination provisions of Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act.

Impact of Sexual Harassment on Students

According to the American Association of University Women's (AAUW) study, *Hostile Hallways: The AAUW Survey on Sexual Harassment in America's Schools*, the impact of sexual harassment in schools is expansive (1993). Most girls (85 percent) and 76 percent of boys have been harassed in school. AAUW identified two types of impact on students: educational and emotional. The *educational impact* includes students no longer wanting to attend school, staying home from school or cutting a class. Students may have a lower participation in class and have more difficulty paying attention. They may also have lower academic performance (particularly in the class where the harassment is occurring) and difficulty in studying. Some students in the study thought about changing schools, and some actually did so.

The *emotional impact* on students is just as detrimental because students are embarrassed about receiving the unwanted attention. They begin to feel self-conscious, and their self-esteem decreases. Students who experience harassment feel more frightened at school and are less confident about establishing positive, romantic relationships. They also experience confusion about their identities and feel less popular.

The AAUW report states, "While nearly half the students (48 percent) say they were 'very upset' or 'somewhat upset,' an alarming 70 percent of girls responded this way, compared with only 24 percent of boys." Thus, victims of harassment can be trapped in a lonely, frightening place.

Legislation and Recent Litigation

Since this landmark study, school districts have become more aware of their liability because of litigation throughout the country. In *Franklin vs. Gwinnett County Public Schools*, the court found in 1997 that students can collect financial damages for teacher-to-student harassment. *Cannon vs. University of Chicago* in 1997 allowed students to be compensated for abuse if the school knew or should have known about the abuse or if teachers used their authority to sexually harass students (Thompson Publishing Group, 1998).

However, recent rulings have changed the legal landscape. In 1998, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 5-4 in the *Gebser vs. Lago Vista Independent School District* case. The opinion states:

> Previously, many courts found schools liable for teacher-student harassment when officials were unaware of it, reasoning that teachers had used their school-provided authority to manipulate students into having sexual relationships and that schools should pay for that misuse of authority. That argument, however, will no longer be valid (Thompson Publishing Group, 1998).

Organizations across the nation expressed concern that the ruling "effectively bars access to the legal system for students and their families for their schools' failure to remedy sexual harassment" (Thompson Publishing Group, 1998).

Although this court ruling was favorable to school districts for teacher-to-student harassment, districts should not interpret this as a reason to stop addressing the subject or training administrators, teachers, students and parents (Yánez-Pérez,

***Sexual Harassment** - continued on page 12*

Sexual Harassment *- continued from page 11*

1997).

IDRA operates the Desegregation Assistance Center – South Central Collaborative for Equity (SCCE), funded under Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to serve school districts in Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. The center provides information, technical assistance and training in sex, race and national origin desegregation to eligible local education agencies requesting assistance within the five-state region. Sex desegregation assistance enables local education agencies to recognize specific forms of gender discrimination and develop districtwide needs assessment procedures in the area of sex equity. The center also helps agencies select or adapt materials to make schools free of gender bias and provides training on the uses of those materials. Several districts have pro-actively established policies to prevent sex harassment and have set up procedures and provided training to district personnel to respond appropriately when harassment occurs (Scott, 1996).

As a nation, it behooves us to address this form of abuse in school because of the emotional and educational toll it has taken on a large number of students. Hopefully, when the 50th anniversary of Title IX approaches, drastic inroads will have been made in eradicating sexual harassment in schools.

Resources

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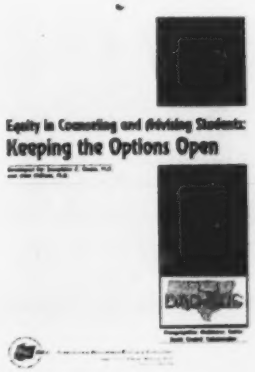
DESEGREGATION ASSISTANCE MODULES AVAILABLE

Equity in Counseling and Advising Students: Keeping the Options Open

by Josephine F. Garza, M.A., and Alva E. McNeal, M.A.



This training module is designed for trainers to assist classroom teachers and school administrators and provides cross-cultural counseling practices that can be used when working with culturally diverse populations. Use this tool to help participants become familiar with counseling roles that promote equity in a multicultural society. Participants can also review strategies for cross-cultural counseling by applying them to situations that will maximize effectiveness when working with culturally diverse populations. This 42-page module comes with session outlines, a pre/post test, and handout and transparency masters (ISBN 1-878550-40-3; 1997 Second Edition).

Avoiding Sex Bias in Counseling

by Josephine F. Garza, M.A., and Joe R. Gonzales, M.A.

This training module for trainers allows counselors the opportunity to review concepts and strategies that can be used to provide students with sex-fair guidance. Participants will become cognizant of historical perspectives on the role of women in the United States. Use this module to familiarize participants with counseling practices that reflect sex equity and with issues of sex bias in testing. This 43-page module comes with session outlines, a pre/post test, and handout and transparency masters (ISBN 1-878550-58-6; 1995 Revised).

Civil Rights Compliance: An Update

by Alva E. McNeal, M.A.

This training module is designed for trainers to assist classroom teachers and school administrators with the legal intent and requirements for procedure and employment practices contained in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Use this tool to help participants become familiar with the civil rights movement activities that occurred between 1954 and 1965 in the United States. Participants can also learn about the race desegregation services available through Title IV Desegregation Assistance Centers. This 68-page module comes with session outlines, a pre/post test, handout and transparency masters, and background readings (ISBN 1-878550-18-7; 1996 Second Edition).

Each module is $8.50 and is available from IDRA at 5835 Callaghan Road, Suite 350, San Antonio, Texas 78228-1190; 210/684-8180; fax 210/684-5389; E-mail: idra@idra.org.

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End of an Era - continued from page 2

Texas student tracking system, such a process for tracking school completion seems not only feasible but also essential to arriving at estimates of Texas schools' holding power. Regardless of what formula is adopted, many see that a change is essential if the state is to start working seriously on reducing the statewide dropout rate, a rate IDRA estimates is approximately 40 percent.

Reading

Earlier this year, Texas Gov. Bush announced his commitment to creating schools that had the majority of Texas children reading by the third grade. Legislative analysts expect the governor to convert his vision to a legislative proposal that will outline strategies for achieving that objective. Questions concerning how students with special needs will achieve this task – including those who have limited English proficiency – will be worth watching as the legislation evolves.

A related question involves what will be done with children who are unable to demonstrate mastery on the state-mandated reading test before the end of the year. While the proposal made references to intervention and intensive remediation for those who had not passed the state test, some suggest that pupils who have not passed the test by year's end will be subject to retention in-grade. Many advocates do not support either retention in-grade or social promotion. But it is currently unclear whether third graders will continue to receive an opportunity for additional help to pass the exam over the summer (by attending alternatives to retention programs created in previous legislation) or whether they simply will be held back. Research noting the ineffectiveness of retention in-grade, coupled with research linking retention to over-age factors in grade and school dropouts, support a need for careful structuring of such reading-related initiatives (see Page 3).

Public Money for Private Schooling

While intra-family fights over public school funding may dot the legislative landscape, the major battles may well involve a war over the future of public education itself. In a previous legislative battle over the issue, the Texas House deadlocked on a proposal to adopt a pilot voucher program. Under that proposal a group of low-income Texas students would have received vouchers that they could use to purchase educational services from private school providers. Buoyed by a growing national focus on the CEO Foundation's targeting of the Edgewood school district (the lead district in the state's hard-won battle for funding equity), voucher proponents will try to convince a majority of the state's legislators that Texas should provide public tax dollars to finance enrollment in private and parochial schools.

In 1999, pro-voucher proponents will attempt to convince legislators that it is time to begin the abandonment of public schooling by creating a pilot program involving the provision of state tax money for private education. Though touted as an "experiment" designed to "challenge" public schools into improving, this strategy is a common first step among those who propose to replace public schooling with a network of private for-profit school operations, working in tandem with private not-for-profit schools. Led by a handful of wealthy corporate leaders who have decided to write off public schooling and partnered with advocates who support plans to have the state assume the cost for pupils already enrolled in private schools, voucher advocates have used the cause of low-income, minority pupil underachievement as the cover to promote their agenda.

It is not accidental that vouchers as a funding approach have come on the heels of major victories in moving the state toward equalizing funding in all public schools. A review of past voting records also reveals that many voucher advocates are the same leaders who vigorously *opposed* proposals to equalize funding in Texas public schools. Encouraged by efforts in other parts of the country and inconsistencies in state court rulings challenging vouchers in other parts of the country, voucher advocates are geared to create the most serious challenge to this state's educational operations since the creation of public schooling in the state. If voucher proponents are successful, many of the issues cited earlier become moot as privately operated schools, free from most state regulations, undo more than 150 years of public education reform in Texas.

Summary

Another issue of concern is affirmative action in higher education. The impact of the *Hopwood* decision and interpretation and a serious minority "brain-drain" from Texas schools has led many Texas advocates to encourage state policy-makers to explore ways of effectively recruiting and retaining diverse students at the state's major universities. Recommendations from a legislative interim committee include

End of an Era – continued on page 14

IDRA Policy Briefs to be Released Soon

The Intercultural Development Research Association is developing a series of policy briefs on four key issues in education. The series will be released in January 1999 to inform community and policy decisions during the Texas legislative session.

Topics Include:

Disciplinary alternative education programs

Dropout and attrition in Texas public high schools

In-grade retention

Use of public money for private schooling

The series and associated data will be available on-line at www.idra.org

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increased funding for a myriad of programs ranging from enhanced scholarship support to incentives for universities to recruit and graduate greater numbers of minority pupils.

There is also some interest in assessing the effects of earlier higher education reforms that called for the automatic admission of pupils graduating in the top 10 percent of Texas high schools and the policies encouraging local colleges and universities to diversify the criteria used for making admissions and financial aid decisions.

Faced with a second consecutive budget surplus and a myriad of conflicting priorities, it is impossible to predict which proposals will make it through the process. But as is the case in most Texas sessions, monitoring the process will be crucial to those impacted by what happens in Austin.

Maria "Cuca" Robledo Montecel, Ph.D., is the executive director of IDRA. Albert Cortez, Ph.D., is director of the IDRA Institute for Policy and Leadership. Comments and questions may be directed to them via e-mail at idra@idra.org.

The E-Rate *- continued from page 7*

survey, see <www.itc.org/edlinc/press/eratesurvey.html>.

Several national educational organizations, including the U.S. Catholic Conference and the American Association of School Administrators, have joined in a nationwide campaign to protect the E-rate. The coalition charges that telecommunications companies (MCI, AT&T, Sprint) take the savings from the deregulation that produced the E-rate, that they can potentially open a new multimillion-dollar market by winning contracts with schools and libraries due to the same act and that, at the same time, they impose a surcharge on their services and blame the E-rate for it. For more information about the effort to save the E-rate, visit the Consortium for School Networking (www.cosn.org). Further information about E-rates can be found on the E-rate hotline web site (www.eratehotline.org) and on the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Technology web site (www.ed.gov/Technology/commit.html).

Let us hope the forces of reason win the upper hand in the battle to reduce the technology gap between wealthy and poor schools in our communities. Let us ensure that all children have equitable opportunity to comprehend the new dimensions the world is assuming through technology. This will signify an important step toward educating the future generations to understand and even thrive in the technologically driven world in which they are destined to live.

Resources

Green, L.C. "Cruising the Web with English Language Learners," *IDRA Newsletter* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, May 1997).

National Center for Education Statistics. *The Condition of Education 1998* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Education Research and Improvement, 1998).

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HIGHLIGHTS OF RECENT IDRA ACTIVITIES

In September, IDRA worked with **8,404** teachers, administrators and parents through **73** training and technical assistance activities and **158** program sites in **12** states plus the United Kingdom. Topics included:

- Creating and Selling Effective School Reform Strategies
- Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and Curriculum Alignment
- IDRA *Content Area Program Enhancement* Project
- *WOW Workshop on Workshops*

Participating agencies and school districts included:

- Ector County Independent School District (ISD), Texas
- Atlanta Public Schools, Georgia
- Laredo United ISD, Texas
- Truth or Consequences Public Schools, New Mexico
- Northside ISD, San Antonio, Texas
- Texas Education Service Center, Region XVIII

Activity Snapshot

School teachers need ongoing professional development and continuing opportunities for mentoring and collaborating with reading specialists in order to provide more effective reading instruction at all grade levels. The national network of comprehensive centers has created the Reading Success Network that will improve student reading achievement by developing a national network of trainers of teacher-coaches. The STAR Center is participating in the Reading Success Network and hosted its kickoff training of trainers institute. Currently, regional teams are training school level teacher-coaches who will then support classroom teachers' efforts to provide powerful instruction in reading. The Reading Success Network is a collective response to President Clinton's Call to Action for American Education in the 21st Century and to Secretary Riley's Seven Initiatives that include the goal to have every student read independently and well by the end of third grade. The STAR Center is the comprehensive regional assistance center that serves Texas. It is a collaboration of IDRA, the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin, and RMC Research Corporation.

Regularly, IDRA staff provides services to:

- public school teachers
- parents
- administrators
- other decision makers in public education

Services include:

- training and technical assistance
- evaluation
- serving as expert witnesses in policy settings and court cases
- publishing research and professional papers, books, videos and curricula

For information on IDRA services for your school district or other group, contact IDRA at 210/684-8180.

VISIT IDRA ON THE INTERNET!

IDRA is pleased to present its World Wide Web site:

http://www.idra.org

Here you will find IDRA resources, *IDRA Newsletter* articles, research results, statistics, fact sheets, policy alerts, conference information and a convenient directory of links to other sites. Jump onto your favorite browser and check us out!

Welcome to the Intercultural Development Research Association!
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Creating Schools That Work For All Children
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IDRA is an independent, non-profit organization that advocates the right of every child to a quality education. For more than 20 years, IDRA has worked for excellence and equity in education in Texas and across the United States. IDRA conducts research and development activities, creates, implements and administers innovative education programs, and provides teacher, administrator, and parent training and technical assistance.

IDRA's mission and areas of focus

Policy updates

Upcoming events

Professional development, programs and materials development, research and evaluation, and policy and leadership services

Collaborative programs that work for all children, including the STAR Center, Desegregation Assistance Center – South Central Collaborative for Equity, and the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program

Latest dropout statistics, a 10-year perspective on literacy and more

Text of the *IDRA Newsletter* from the last two years, indices for previous years

Descriptions of materials and how to order them

Paradigmatic views of reality

Separating fact from fiction about education

Brief staff biographies, send e-mail to a staff member

Your launching point

Search button to find what you want in IDRA's web page

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Challenges as We Enter a New Century: Leadership for Education

IDRA policy and leadership development promotes accountability and responsibility. Using inclusive, cutting-edge and broad-based strategies, IDRA develops leadership within communities, schools and policy-making bodies to create collaborative and enlighted educational policies that work for *all* children.

There is a need to make schools more accountable and to make sure the funding system serves all children with equity and excellence. Schools are seeking ways to provide an appropriate and high quality language response program to children who speak a language other than English. Far too many minority students are being retained in-grade and dropping out of school.

IDRA's vision is that all schools and communities have the resources and training they need to prepare all their children. The following are a few examples of IDRA's accomplishments in the area of policy and leadership in the past 25 years.

- Since 1973, IDRA is the only organization that can claim continuous, uninterrupted involvement in Texas school finance reform.
- IDRA's research in 1994 on school dropouts in Texas led to revisions in the state's education law regarding monitoring and preventing school dropouts.
- Dr. José Cárdenas, IDRA founder and director emeritus, and IDRA staff played a key role helping to guarantee the civil rights of all children regardless of race, sex and national origin in landmark court cases such as *Rodriguez vs. San Antonio, U.S. vs. Texas, Keys vs. Denver, Lau vs. Nichols, Doe vs. Plyer, and Rodriguez vs. L.A. USD* and *Edgewood vs. Kirby I, II, III and IV.*
- IDRA has provided leadership in the area of immigrant education throughout its history. Most recently, it directed an educational collaborative in two school districts to develop and implement innovative strategies for addressing the educational needs of secondary level recent immigrant populations. The study was funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and included local education agency personnel, recent immigrant students and their families, college and university personnel, community groups and private sector and job training representatives.
- IDRA has been creating leadership development around the issue of the use of public funds for private schools. IDRA is informing parents and the general public about the educational, social and economic impact of negative educational vouchers on families who are minority, economically disadvantaged or limited-English-proficient.

In anticipation of the upcoming legislative session, IDRA will release a series of policy briefs on disciplinary alternative education programs, dropouts, in-grade retention and school vouchers. IDRA remains committed to the goal of framing and supporting essential policy and leadership issues for advocacy that will improve educational excellence and equity for all children. "Excellence without equity is absolutely impossible; and equity without excellence – is absolutely unacceptable," adds Dr. María Robledo Montecel, IDRA executive director. "All children are capable of learning...Success will require that we value every single child."

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